

663. The theater at Venice. The first tragedy produced in Italy was written by Albertino Mussato, a Paduan, early in the fourteenth century in imitation of Latin dramas. The subject was the conflicts of Padua with Ezzelino da Romano. Albertino's work was not imitated, for the mysteries held the stage until the end of the fifteenth century. They were represented on stages erected in public places of the cities. At Venice were invented *momaria*, in which there was no theatrical illusion, but *brio*, joviality, and irony. They began at weddings, where after the wedding feast some one, impersonating an heroic personage, narrated the great deeds of the ancestors of the spouses, with numberless exaggerations and jest, from which the name *momaria*, or *bombaria*, was derived. The companies of the *calza* figured in all gay assemblies at Venice from 1400 to the end of the sixteenth century. They renewed the Latin comedies and "carried festivity and good taste even into the churches." Theatrical exhibitions became the favorite amusement of the Venetians, and were presented not only in private houses but also in monasteries, although secular persons were not present.¹

664. Dancing. Public sports. From the early Middle Ages the ecclesiastical authorities disapproved of dancing, but the people were very fond of it and never gave it up. The poems and romances are full of it.² Some usages of dancing in Germany were very gross. The man swung his partner off the floor as far as he could. If any woman refused to dance with any man, it occurred sometimes that he slapped her face, but it was disputed whether this was not beyond the limit.³ The usages at the

carnival were very gross and obscene.⁴ All
popular sports were
coarse and cruel. It seemed to be considered good
fun to torment
the weak and to watch their helpless struggles.
Birds were shot,
and beasts baited, in a way to give pain and
prolong it. At
Nuremberg the "cat knight" fought with a cat
hung about his
own neck, which he must bite to death in order to
be knighted

¹ Molmenti, *Ve-nezia nella Vita Prwata*, 297-299.

² Lacroix, *Manner-s, Customs, and Dress of M. A.*, 241.

⁸ Angerstein, *Volkstanze*, 30,

⁴ Schultz, *D. Z.*, 414.